

ART PHOTOGRAPHY: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF PHOTOGRAPHY CONSUMPTION IN ROMANIA

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Abstract:

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to gain knowledge about the current state of economic impact of photography consumption in Romania. This article's aim is to explore art photography market development in Romania and possible influences of art photography consumption on national economy.

Design/methodology/approach – Several public databases were consulted to gain information regarding Romanian art photography market. An art photography overview was done. There were analysed subjects as: art photography impact on national economy, how much photography studios are in Romania, how much art photography exhibitions are done in Romania annually. Findings - Photography has weak influences on the national economy compared to other industries. Photography has a major social impact that can also be correlated with economic growth. Originality/value – This paper aims to analyse the economic impact of art photography consumption in Romania and serves as a base for future studies in this area.

Keywords: The Economic Impact of Art Photography, The Romanian Art Photography Market, Art Photography Consumption; Photography Marketing

JEL Classification: M310

1. Introduction

From an instrument accessible to a very limited group of individuals, photography has become so accessible that anyone can become a photographer through the smartphone they own, or through digital cameras that have become very affordable in recent years. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between an amateur photographer and a professional or artistic photographer.

Photographs are ubiquitous: in magazines, newspapers, books, news, billboards, advertising leaflets, smartphones, family albums, house walls, and so forth.

Even though photography is everywhere, I argue that there is an aspect of photography that eludes us, namely, the valorization of photography as an art form in Romania. The following hypotheses underlie this research:

1. Romania has a multitude of talented photographic artists (who create photographic art);
2. Photographic art and the culture of photographic art are underdeveloped in Romania.
3. Due to the limited culture of photographic art in Romania, photographic artists cannot flourish.
4. Photographic art has a significant social impact.
5. Photographic art has a minor economic impact.
6. Photographic art, along with other arts, has a significant indirect economic impact.

The importance of visual language can be inferred from the words of John Berger, who stated, "Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak." Through the use of photographs, we can convey emotions, narrate the pain or joy of events. Photography and images represent an essential learning tool.

Andreas Feininger asserts in *The Creative Photographer*, "I consider photography to be one of the most important and beneficial discoveries ever made by mankind." Subsequently, we will try to find a place for artistic photography within a country's economy.

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2. Literature review

Photographic art, alongside other forms of art, holds an estimable value in society. There are no comparative terms for art; the value of artwork x is not inherently greater than that of artwork y, as the evaluation of art is subjective and interpreted differently by each individual.

It is certain that photographic art serves as a powerful means of expression. Thanks to photographic artists, we can travel anytime and anywhere, analyzing the splendor of the Eiffel Tower or the Egyptian pyramids. Photography helps us broaden our horizons of knowledge, learn, and become better individuals. Can these aspects be measured? Can we gauge the impact of photography on the economy? The answer to this question would be philosophical, as no measuring systems have been devised to provide a precise answer. I believe that we should measure the economic impact of photography solely through the lens of its social impact – how photographic art influences society and leads to increased financial output.

As Andreas Feininger stated in *The Creative Photographer*, "The scientist searches for facts and knowledge, the philosopher for values and wisdom. Science creates technology; philosophy leads to art. At its highest level, photography, in my opinion, combines the essence of both disciplines." Following this assertion we can conclude that the answer concerning the place of photography in the economy will similarly be philosophical.

I invite you to examine what some authors have to say about the value of photographic art for both society and the economy.

Saayman, M shown in his research mentions that „the festival makes a significant contribution to revenue generation as well as to job creation, thereby confirming that investments made by government in arts and culture can address economic objectives.”

Tepper, S.J. in his paper evaluates recent claims that art and culture have become more valuable assets in the new economy. Based on conversations with several prominent cultural economists, the author argues that advocates and scholars should be more cautious in their attempts to draw out the implications of the changing economy on culture. Rather than spend time calculating the impact or size of the "creative economy," the author argues that we should direct our analytical and policy energies toward better understanding how creative work and institutions are changing and what might be done to foster a more robust, creative and diverse cultural life.

Srithongrung, A. proves that „...arts industries directly enhance the local economy. The arts industries also indirectly enhance the local economy through the accumulation of a knowledge-class workforce.”

Grodach, C. says „Our analysis provides evidence that the arts are an important component of many regional economies, but also highlights their volatility.”

I have discovered that in the U.S. there is an INDEX which measures art market it is called The National Arts Index (NAI) and it provides a measure for the arts activities in the United States. NAI is an annual report on the U.S. arts and cultural sector creative vitality and economic health.

Rawon Lee have used this INDEX in order to compare the correlation between NAI and GDP. His conclusions are „Using the U.S. GDP and NAI, this study tested the proposition that arts activities enhance economic growth. First, a positive correlation was found between GDP and NAI between 2002 and 2013 leading to the conclusion that arts activities and economic growth appear to be positively related at the national level. Test result interpretations indicate that the arts grow with the economy in the United States, suggesting that the arts are an integral part of U.S. society in which economic growth does not constrain artistic activities, nor do artistic activities hamper economic growth. Rather, the vitality of the arts sector seems to reflect the strength of the national economy and vice versa.

At the same time, the test results do not provide statistically significant support for the view that an increase in arts activities spurs economic growth. No lead-lag relationship between U.S. GDP and NAI between 2002 and 2013 has been confirmed by the test results either. Rather, they suggest that a causal relationship between arts activities and economic growth may not be as evident or present as believed, at least at the national level.

Helmut Gernsheim in *Creative Photography*, (1962) says "Photography is the only 'language' understood in all corners of the world and, bringing together all nations and cultures, it unifies the human family. Independent of political influences - where people are free - it faithfully reflects life and events, allowing us to share the hopes and despair of others, shedding light on political and social circumstances. We become eyewitnesses to the humanity and inhumanity of mankind..."

Susan Sontag cite in *On Photography* "Now, for an absurdly small sum, we can familiarize ourselves not only with the most famous locality in the world, but also with almost all the summits of Europe. The ubiquity of the photographer is something wonderful. We have all seen the Alps and know Chamonix and Mer de Glace by heart, although we have never faced the horrors of the English Channel... We have crossed the Andes, reached Tenerife, entered Japan, 'visited' Niagara and the archipelago of a thousand islands, savored the delights of war with our fellow men (in shop windows), participated in the councils of the powerful, become acquainted with kings, emperors, and queens, with prima donnas, ballet favorites, and 'celebrated actors.' Ghosts we have seen and were not afraid; we stood in front of kings and did not uncover our heads; and briefly, through a 7.6 cm lens, we looked at all the vanities of this wicked yet beautiful world." Source mentioned by author - D.P., editorialist, in *Once a Week*, (London), 1 June, 1861

Andreas Feininger states in *The Creative Photographer*, "The times of job security (as a photographer) have largely passed. The present belongs to the photographer who works as a freelancer."

3. Research design

The theme of my doctoral studies is "Art photography consumption motivations -influencing factors and consequences at the macroeconomic and social levels". This study constitutes a significant fragment of the broader research that will be undertaken throughout my doctoral program.

To gather data on the art photography market in Romania, I intend to explore several public databases, conducting a thorough review of the landscape of art photography within the country.

The purpose of research - To gain information regarding Romanian art photography market.

The decision problem:

Identifying if there are enough public data in order to make a conclusion regarding the impact of art photography on national economy.

Research problem:

To gain knowledge about the current state of art photography impact on national economy in Romania.

Research objectives:

- O1 - Estimate the number of Romanian art photographers;
- O2 - Identify the number of art photography events held in Romania annually;
- O3 - Estimate the scale of the art photography market.

Fundamental hypothesis:

Solving the above-mentioned objectives requires the analysis of the photographic market and the current context.

In close connection with the research objectives, the following fundamental hypothesis was established:

The Romanian art photography market has a strong influence on the economy but this influence can not be measured due to complexity and subjectivity of the field.

Working hypothesis:

To verify the fundamental hypothesis, starting from the purpose of this research, the following working hypotheses will be established:

- H_{w1}** – Romania has over 100 photo artists
- H_{w2}** - The culture of art photography is in an underdeveloped state in Romania
- H_{w3}** - The influence of art photography on the national economy can only be approximated

Method:

The results of my study were obtained through comprehensive online research utilizing all available databases. I have identified the following key points: the total count of photo studios, their revenue, the potential workforce within this sector, an approximate figure for the number of art photography events in Romania, and an estimated count of art photographers.

4. Findings

Below are the results for each hypothesis, as presented in the following table. The data has been thoroughly analyzed, and concise findings are outlined.

Table 2. Hypothesis and findings

Hypothesis	Results
H_{w1} – Romania has over 100 photo artists;	Based on the identified data, my estimation suggests that there are approximately 2000 photographers engaged in art production in Romania. I can not presume the approximate number of recognized photo artist by an authority as we don't have such authority.
H_{w2} – The culture of art photography is in an underdeveloped state in Romania;	Following an extensive investigation, I have identified four primary annual photography events in Romania. It appears that the frequency of such events is notably limited.
H_{w3} – The influence of art photography on the national economy can only be approximated.	Specific data concerning the art photography market is currently unavailable. Making an estimation for the overall photography market is also challenging due to the lack of precise information. The approximate turnover of this field is 62,9 million euros. Approximately 2,692 employees are engaged on this field (0.07% of the total employees in Romania).

Estimation of the number of photographic artists in Romania:

According to the "Asociația Artiștilor Fotografi din România" website, there were 121 members in 2023. Interestingly, during the period from 1989 to 1992, there were a significant number of members, as follows:

- In 1989, there were 1474 registered members, out of which only 646 were contributing artist photographers.
- In 1990, there were 1531 registered members, out of which only 465 were contributing artist photographers.
- In 1991, there were 1560 registered members, out of which only 447 were contributing artist photographers.
- In 1992, there were 1615 registered members, out of which only 350 were contributing artist photographers.

According to Facebook tools, there are between 1900 and 2300 photographers in Romania. The largest Facebook group of photographers, "La Conacul Fotografilor," comprises 10,350 photographers. Additionally, I have identified six significant photographers' groups on Facebook, with a range of 1,400 to 33,800 members. Notably, the largest group serves the purpose of buying and selling photo equipment. The Romanian Artist Community on Flickr, one of the biggest platforms, has 226 members.

On Saatchiart, a international platform for art photography, there are 2,588 photos of Romanian photographers exposed (I can't estimate the number of photographers), with prices ranging from \$143 to \$29,450 for one photo. Moreover, there are over 2,000 Romanian photographers on Behance, 300 of them seems to be more active on the platform.

Estimation of the number of photo events in Romania:

Based on the comprehensive investigation, it has been determined that there are four major photography events in Romania. Additionally, there are several smaller events, such as photo exhibitions in art galleries. The primary events are as follows:

1. Walk & Shoot – București
2. Bucharest Photofest – București
3. Photo România Festival - Cluj-Napoca
4. Festivalul de fotografie „Secvențe” - Ploiești

Estimation of the photographic market in Romania:

65% of Romanians own a camera among their personal gadgets. In Romania, the photo-video market segment is continuously growing, with consumers increasingly interested in diversifying their personal camera equipment and knowledge about photography techniques. These are the conclusions of a study on the popularity of the camera in Romania, conducted by F64 Studio, the largest store of its kind in Southeastern Europe.

The economic details of F64 Studio shop can provide valuable insights into the state of photographic art in Romania. In 2023, F64 Studio SRL company recorded a turnover of 137,372,833 lei (approximately 27,752,087 euros) and a net profit of 3,830,484 lei (approximately 773,835 euros).

Other shops within the same sector have recorded the following numbers:

photosetup.ro (SIMUS TRADING SRL)

Turnover – 14,541,229 lei

Net profit – 757,568 lei

ishoot.ro (KPO COMPUTERS SRL)

Turnover – 6,781,824 lei

Net profit – 900,161 lei

fotohobby.ro (Total Star Service SRL)

Turnover – 6,913,666 lei

Net profit – 280,539 lei

As well, I was searching for Fine Art Photography selling platforms. There are some platforms that sell art photography. But they don't sell photos of Romanian photographers, they sell photos of foreign photographers, this platforms are: europosters.ro and posterstore.com. I can't make an estimation of how many art photography are sold in Romania. The only way to make this estimation is to make a quantitative analysis, to ask people how often and how much photographs they buy.

Another viable approach to estimating the photographic market is to analyze the aggregated data from all photo studios in Romania. These data are inaccurate because there may be businesses that have passed one type of activity but in reality deal with other types of activity. The CAEN code of this companies is 7420 and all financial data are available online.

CAEN code: 7420 - Photographic Activities

Number of economic agents:

4,557 economic agents

0.19% of the total economic agents in Romania

Turnover:

433.9 million lei (**98.6** million euros)

0.02% of Romania's turnover

Number of employees:

2,692 employees

0.07% of the total employees in Romania

Profit:

145.9 million lei (**33.2** million euros)

0.06% of the net profit realized in Romania

5. Conclusion and implications

1. The online presence of photographers in Romania appears to be significant, with a varying number of members in different photography-focused groups on platforms like Facebook and Flickr, indicating a thriving online community of photography enthusiasts and professionals.

2. There is a low presence of photo events in Romania, with four major photography events alongside smaller exhibitions and gatherings. This indicates a small interest in photographic arts from the community. These events provide platforms for photographers to showcase their work and engage with the wider community. Therefore it is very important to have such events at least once a year in every big city of Romania.

3. The photographic market in Romania demonstrates a promising trajectory, characterized by a steady increase in the number of camera owners, a rising interest in photography techniques, and a growing photo-video market segment, as evidenced by the performances of prominent photography stores like F64 Studio and other similar businesses.

4. Despite the availability of platforms for the sale of art photography, it is noteworthy that some platforms primarily offer works by foreign photographers, reflecting potential opportunities for local photographers to gain more visibility and recognition within the domestic market.

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